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LAGGING DEVELOPMENT OF CONSUMER ELECTRONICS PRODUCTION IN THE USSR

In terms of both quality and quantity, production of consumer electronics* in the USSR is lagging far behind previously announced plans. The level of production scheduled for home radios in 1965 is lower than that originally planned for 1960. For television sets, the 1965 level of production has been set moderately higher than the old 1960 goal but the number of sets now scheduled to be in use by 1965 is much lower than that established by earlier Soviet forecasts. Although certain of the more expensive home radios and television sets currently manufactured in the USSR are built for long service life and reliable performance, the over-all repair and wear-out rates for this equipment continue to be excessively high. For the Soviet consumer, this situation is further aggravated by the consistent failure of the electronics industry to fulfill the modest plans for supply of components, spare parts, and installation accessories to the retail market. Soviet propaganda statements traditionally paint a superficially bright picture of consumer electronics production by emphasizing percentage increases over carefully selected base years and production levels to be achieved in the future. Examination of all relevant data suggests, however, that continually growing demands for electronic equipment by the military and by industry in the USSR have resulted in a substantial cutback of earlier plans to expand and improve the production of electronics for use by the general population.

* In the USSR, "consumer electronics" consists primarily of home radios, television sets, spare parts, and installation accessories. Together, these items account for approximately 95 percent, by value, of all electronics produced for consumer end use.

Some of the key figures highlighting trends in the production of radios and television sets are shown in the following tabulation:

Actual and Planned Production of Radios and
Television Sets, 1955-65 ^{1/}

	Millions of Units			
	Actual 1955	Actual 1958	Old Plan 1960	New Plan 1965
Radio Sets	3.5	3.9	7.7	7.0 *
Television Sets	.5	1.0	2.5	3.5 *
Total	<u>4.0</u>	<u>4.9</u>	<u>10.2</u>	<u>10.5</u>

* This is an optimum variant of the Plan.

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has reported lower targets for 1965: radio sets - 5.8 million units,
television sets - 3.1 million units. ^{2/}

As indicated by these data, the 1965 target for production of radio sets is significantly lower than that formerly scheduled for achievement in 1960. For television sets, the 1965 production goal has been set moderately above the old 1960 goal but planned rates of growth are substantially lower than those envisaged in the now-abandoned Sixth Five Year Plan. In 1957, spokesman for the electronics industry predicted that the number of television sets in use in the USSR would amount to 8 million units in 1960 and 24 million units by 1965. ^{3/}

As of mid-year 1959, however, there are only 3 million television sets in use in the USSR and the Seven Year Plan calls for this number to increase to not more than 15 million units by 1965. ^{4/}

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Although the USSR has displayed some award-winning television sets and radios at international exhibits in recent years, those sold on the internal market fail to reflect similarly high standards of quality. Reports appearing in the Soviet technical press indicate that of a wide range of television sets produced in the USSR, from 60-85 percent require repairs during the first six months of use. In recent months, plants operating even in the most advanced centers of Soviet electronic production have been accused of manufacturing and shipping television sets having "serious deficiencies." According to these allegations, incidence of repair within the first six months of use occurs as follows: 5/

<u>Producer</u>	<u>Model</u>	<u>Percentage Requiring Repair During First Six Months of Use</u>
Moscow Oblast Sovnarkhoz	Start	85
Leningrad Sovnarkhoz	KVE-49	75
Krasnoyarsk Sovnarkhoz	Avengard-55	72
Moscow City Sovnarkhoz	Rubin	70
Leningrad Sovnarkhoz	Znamya	65
Voronezh Sovnarkhoz	Rekord	60

In the case of the "Rekord" and the "Znamya," a Soviet technical journal recently reported that since undergoing "modernization for better quality," these sets operate less satisfactorily than the earlier models. 6/

Although repair statistics are not available, similarly poor technology in the manufacture of home radios is clearly indicated by other Soviet data. These figures show that while more than 25 million radios were sold to the general

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population in the USSR from 1949-58, only 9.5 million of these sets were still in use as of May 1959. 1/

Officials of the electronics industry have always paid at least lip service to consumer needs for installation accessories and replacement parts. In 1954, for example, the Minister of the Radiotechnical Industry promised that, henceforth, at least 5 percent of all components and parts produced would be allocated as spares and replacements for the consumer market. 3/ As of the present, however, radio installation in rural areas is reported as "greatly impeded by the acute shortage of wire, insulators, and conductors." [redacted]

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[redacted] "the consumers' cooperatives are constantly receiving complaints that batteries for radios cannot be bought" despite the fact that most radio sets owned by the rural population cannot operate without batteries. 2/ Soviet urban dwellers owning television sets are plagued with similar problems. For example, although the "KVN-49" (a 7 inch set) and "Avangard-55" (a 14 inch set) together account for well over half of all television sets which have been sold in the USSR, the supply of spare parts and picture tubes for these models has grown steadily worse in recent years. 10/ The major suppliers of spare parts for these two sets have been cited for delivering only 10-54 percent of the quantities specified by plan. 11/ With respect to high-frequency cable necessary for television installation and repair, [redacted] reports that planned allocations and deliveries to the consumer market are "absolutely inadequate." [redacted] the requirements of the repair network

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and the general public for such cable have been met in recent years as follows:
in 1957 - by 52 percent; in 1958 - by 33 percent. 12/

It is evident from the foregoing that announced goals for the production of consumer electronics in the USSR are of little practical significance. Although production of such goods usually increases from year to year, plans are rarely, if ever, fulfilled. Despite these production increases, per capita gains in the utilization and enjoyment of radio and television sets are very small when viewed against the background of rapid population growth and the high rate of set wearout and breakdown. Up to the present, the desire of the general public in the USSR for electronic equipment has failed to compete successfully against the more effective demands of the military and of industry. It is unlikely that this pattern will change during the foreseeable future.

